

Cuba Invaders' Families Due in U. S. Tomorrow

Refugees Allowed to Take Only Clothes
As They Board Vessel for U. S. Trip

HAVANA, Dec. 26 (AP).—Under a hot tropical sun, about 1,000 relatives of the freed Bay of Pigs prisoners gathered at dockside today to board the freighter African Pilot for the United States.

Some of the elderly emigres fainted, overcome by heat and emotion. At least one old man was rushed aboard the 10,000-ton mercy ship on a stretcher.

Some of the women daubed away tears. Children looked bewildered.

It was a solemn procession, through six security and customs checkpoints manned by Cuban military personnel, as the emigres moved slowly to the dock.

Cuban Red Cross officials were correct—and at times even solicitous—as the lines formed only a few yards from the African Pilot's gangway.

An official of the prisoners' families committee said about 850 men, women and children had cleared through its checkpoint by 10 a.m.

Dress in Sunday Best

Women and children made up an estimated 70 per cent of the group Fidel Castro allowed to follow the liberated Bay of Pigs invasion prisoners to the United States.

Most of the relatives, knowing they could take with them only their bare belongings,

were dressed in their Sunday best.

Carefully made-up women, some of them still wearing hair curlers, nervously clutched their fidgety young children.

The mood of the group was solemn.

Within less than 48 hours, the relatives made up their minds to leave their homeland, many forsaking everything they owned.

Cots Flown In

They were barred from taking Cuban money with them.

In cases where whole families decided to leave, they had to surrender their homes and everything else they owned in Cuba.

Ownership of homes and other property can be retained only if a member of the family stays in Cuba.

Eight American Red Cross officials flew in from Miami this morning with a plane-load of cots, blankets and sanitary equipment to make the overnight voyage of the emigres to Florida more comfortable.

The African Pilot was to sail later in the day.

Meanwhile, informants said prospects were good for the early release of 23 Americans imprisoned in Cuba.

Swiss Ambassador Emil Stadelhöfer, who represents United States interests in Cuba, held a confidential meeting with Prime Minister Fidel Castro on Monday, informants said. They talked for nearly an hour.

The Swiss envoy declined to comment on the meeting, but it was learned that Red Cross Christmas packages have been accepted for delivery to the jailed Americans.

14-Hour Trip

The African Pilot's departure was planned for 5 p.m., and arrival at Port Everglades was

scheduled 14 hours later. Both times are subject to revision in event of delays like those that kept Miami exile colony members on tenterhooks Sunday until the first batch of prisoners arrived by air—nine hours later than scheduled—for Christmas reunions.

The Havana street around the home of Mrs. Berta Barreto was thronged with Cubans seeking Cuban Prisoner Families Committee approval to make the voyage to Florida. The home of Mrs. Barreto, a committee member, was where Mr. Castro and Mr. Donovan signed the agreement for the Bay of Pigs invaders' release for ransom. The committee also handled selection of relatives who would make the ocean trip.

The ransom voyage to Cuba, with an \$11 million down payment in drugs and baby food, and the return trip will write finis to the 400-foot African Pilot's 20-year log of ocean service.

Priest Celebrates Mass

The craft is to go into "mothball" storage because of its age. It was scheduled in fact, to be mothballed before the Cuba round trip, but the sudden need for a vessel to deliver ransom goods gave the African Pilot a few more days of active duty. The craft was provided for the assignment by the Committee of American Steamship Lines.

Vessels that will bear the remainder of the ransom to Cuba have not been designated. Airliners, including some that brought prisoners out of Cuba, delivered some of the ransom freight to Mr. Castro.

Christmas with their families in Miami was a happy day for the invasion veterans, but a quiet one by contrast with hectic, emotional scenes of their arrival at Homestead Air Force Base and reunion with loved ones at Dinner Key, Miami.

One of the freed captives, the Rev. Tomas Macho, celebrated Christmas night mass at Miami's Gesu Roman Catholic Church. The church, a gathering point of the exile colony, was jammed for the mass and brief Spanish-language sermon.

One year ago, priests among the invasion prisoners had to make elaborate secret preparations for Christmas service in Communist Cuban prisons. They said the mass in a virtual whisper on makeshift altars and wearing prison garb instead of clerical vestments.